



The Practical Steps of Disciple-Making

When I equip people to disciple others, I like to ask, “Can you read?” If you can, you can lead a discipleship group. Often I make simple things way too complicated. But God has an amazing knack for putting the cookies on the lower shelf for people like me.

To start a discipleship group, follow these clear-cut, practical steps.

1. **Pray.** This step serves as a reminder that without God’s presence and power we don’t accomplish anything of eternal value. Invite the presence and power of God into everything you do. (See the first section of my *Parent Fuel* book, Chapter 10 for some practical applications.)
2. **Select.** Ask the Lord, “Who do You want in this group—who is open and hungry to know You?” Once you have some direction on this, meet with each person individually. In that meeting give them a strong challenge.
3. **Challenge.** Some people fear inviting others to join them in the disciple-making adventure. That’s understandable, but that kind of fear doesn’t come from God. You may think of many reasons why someone would not want to do this. Resist those thoughts.

Challenge each person to pursue God’s vision for his/her life. Open your Bible to Matthew 4: 19, look the other person in the eyes, and say, “I see God’s potential in you. He has such a great purpose for your life. I want to help you discover how to follow Jesus and to fish for men. That’s why I want you in this group.”

4. **Commit.** Once you challenge each person individually, meet as a group. In a relaxed atmosphere discuss the following issues:
 - *The cost:* “We will meet one hour every _____ at _____. I am asking you to pay a price, so to speak, to join this group. If you commit, you will need to attend every week and do all of the assignments each week.”
 - *The benefit:* “This group will help you to become a man/woman of God. You will move toward maturity in Christ and you will become a leader who helps others know Christ.”
 - *The commitment:* Give him/her the *Moving Toward Maturity* book. (See the list below.) “Take this book. It will guide us each week. As part of our commitment, you must come prepared. Turn to page 11 in *Following Jesus* [or other MTM book], so we can understand clearly our commitments to each other.” Then during the first two or three group meetings, re-read the commitments each time. Ask different ones to read each point. Then have all of them sign each other’s book on page 11 as a pledge of commitment to the group and to each other. By doing this they grasp the seriousness of their commitment.

- *The price*: Charge them for the book. This helps them realize that becoming part of the group will cost them something.

5. **Prepare.** Prior to the first group meeting several actions need to occur for you and your group to come prepared.

- View the group as a long-term process—hopefully you will disciple these people in some way for the rest of your life! And potentially you will work with this particular group over the next few years.
- Use the *Moving Toward Maturity* books with the long-term process in view. The *Moving Toward Maturity* series, five books of ten weeks each, will take you on a stair-step course of maturing your group in Christ. Each book builds on the previous one.

Following Jesus builds a solid foundation for a life-changing relationship with Christ and for becoming a disciple of Christ.

Spending Time Alone with God deepens each person’s relationship with Jesus by teaching how to spend time with Him.

Making Jesus Lord challenges each person to obey Jesus and to give Him control in day-to-day issues.

Giving Away Your Faith guides each person into the wild adventure of overcoming his or her fears and taking the risk to boldly communicate Christ.

Influencing Your World shows the group members that they can become influential leaders through serving the needs of the people around them.

Three additional books will supplement the disciple-making process.

Moving Toward Maturity Leader’s Guide, which you are reading now, will guide you to lead your group. Here you have a simple structure to lead a lively and life-changing discipleship group.

Time Alone with God Notebook gives the practical tools for a daily adventure with God.

Getting Started helps new believers successfully begin their walk with Christ.

Going through these books will take two-plus years. If your group is teenagers, and you begin while your kids attend middle school, they finish in two years. Somewhere along the way they can begin to disciple a younger group of kids—multiplying disciple-makers!

- Order *Following Jesus* and the other *Moving Toward Maturity* books online at www.reach-out.org. You will want to get your own copy of *Following Jesus*. Go through it just like the kids go through their books.
- Decide with the group the time, place, length of meeting, and size of the group. Ideal is from four to eight people. Each book takes at least ten weeks to complete.

6. **Lead.** The success of the group depends not so much on the curriculum, but rather on the way you lead. Build the relationships. Keep your disciples focused. Follow these guidelines to structure the group.

- *Prepare.* At this age the tendency is not to prepare. You can help them to come prepared by calling them a couple of days before the meeting to ask them if they have done the assignments. If they have not prepared, ask them if they need help. If they do, go over the assignments with them. If they come unprepared, meet with them personally during the week to help them prepare. Do this until they get in the habit of it.
- *Focus.* Begin each meeting by reminding them of the purpose of the group. Memorize Matthew 4:19 and say it to each other weekly.
- *Review.* For the first two weeks, go over the commitments on page 11 of *Following Jesus*. Again remind them to come prepared. Each week ask them to review one specific insight that God taught them the previous week and one specific way they applied that insight.
- *Pray.* After reminding them of their purpose and reviewing their insights, divide them into prayer triplets. Keep them in the same groups of three for several weeks, then switch. If the group doesn't divide exactly in threes, pray in twos.
- *Discuss.* Spend at least thirty to forty minutes going through the material related to the book. When they raise topics outside of the focused discussion, engage them, but do not get derailed. Discuss those topics later. At the same time encourage them to talk. Resist the temptation to lecture. Let them do most of the talking.
- *Share.* Save time each week to talk about the personal issues and the questions they raise. At first the conversations will be surface, but as the group grows closer they will openly discuss their issues. If time becomes a problem, invite them to meet outside of the group time to continue.
- *Involve.* Once the group begins, involve them in doing ministry outside the group—meeting a need, sharing Christ with their friends, going to the inner city, doing a local missions project, or taking a mission trip overseas.

As you follow these steps, the Lord will use you with your group and those they influence in ways you cannot even imagine now!